

REMARKS/DISCUSSION:

This Amendment A is being filed within three months after the shortened statutory period for response that ended on May 26, 2004. Accordingly, a Petition for a Three-Month Extension of Time is attached hereto.

By this Amendment A, claims 4, 6, 7, 9, 11-13, and 15-17 are pending in this application. Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 10, 14 and 18-20 have been canceled without prejudice to the Applicants.

Applicant has carefully studied the outstanding Office Action. This Amendment is intended to be fully responsive to all points of rejection raised by the Examiner and is believed to place the application in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Objection to the Specification

The disclosure immediately following "Background of the Invention" on page 1 is objected to because attorney docket numbers are cited. The paragraph on page 1, starting at line 12 has been amended to recite patent application and patent numbers. Further, a new section entitled "Cross Reference to Related Patent Applications" has been added at page 1, line 3 indicating that the present application is a continuation of patent application 09/644,991, which is a divisional of patent application no. 09/412,557, both of which are now abandoned.

Applicants' review of the files for the related cases reveal that a Restriction Requirement was made in the '557 application that had the same claims as the present application. This action may be moot for the present application, since claims 18-20 have been canceled, and these claims were held to be distinct from claims 1-17 in the '557 application.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claim 8 stands rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,944,737 to Tsonton et al. Claim 8 has been canceled without prejudice to the Applicants.

Claims 18-19 stand rejected as being anticipated by US Patent no. 5,498,292 to Tovey et al. Claims 18-19 have been canceled without prejudice to the Applicants.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-4, 9 and 13 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Tsonton et al. and Tovey et al. Claims 1-3 have been canceled without prejudice to the Applicants. Claim 4 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 5, which was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim; claim 9 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 19, which was objected to; and claim 13 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 14, which was objected to.

Claim 20 stands rejected as being unpatentable over Tovey et al. Claim 20 has been canceled without prejudice to the Applicants.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 5-7, 10-12 and 14-17 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 5, 10 and 14 have been canceled and the subject matter included in independent claims 4, 9 and 13 respectively. The remaining objected to claims have been amended as required to make them dependent upon the amended independent claim, either directly or indirectly.

Conclusion

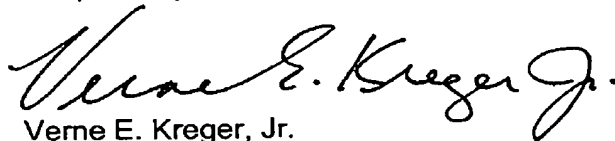
Applicant submits that in view of the discussion, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(e) and 103 have been overcome and that the invention is now patentable

over the cited prior. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider all rejections and pass this case to issue.

Should any minor points remain prior to issuance of a Notice of Allowance, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees, which may be required to Account No. 10-0750/END-796/VEK.

Respectfully submitted,



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DATED: August 24, 2004